



Building a Resilient Food System in Plymouth County

Community Advisory Board – Terms of Reference Effective July 30, 2025

1. Background

Old Colony Planning Council, in partnership with Plymouth County and the Marion Institute, is leading a regional initiative to strengthen the local food system. The project aims to assess current challenges and opportunities in the food system and develop a regional action plan to support local food production and distribution. A key component of this effort is the Community Advisory Board (CAB)—a group of residents and stakeholders from across Plymouth County who bring their lived experiences, local insights, and diverse perspectives to the project.

2. Purpose

The CAB's purpose is to help identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities within the food system through the use of the [Community and Agriculture Resilience Audit Tool](#) (CARAT) (see Attachment 1) and to promote collaboration across sectors and communities.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

CAB members will:

- Provide insight on lived experience and/or food system expertise
- Help review and discuss CARAT themes and indicators
- Identify individuals or groups to participate in interviews or focus groups
- Attend or support public engagement events (as interest and availability allow)
- Help develop recommendations for the final regional food action plan
- Promote awareness of the project within their networks

No prior experience with food systems or planning is required—just a willingness to engage and share perspectives.

4. Membership

The CAB will include

- Community members from diverse backgrounds and communities across Plymouth County
- Representatives from food access, farming, education, business, public health, and other sectors
- Individuals with lived experience of food insecurity or related challenges
- Representatives from Old Colony Planning Council and Plymouth County

The Old Colony Planning Council, Plymouth County, and the Marion Institute will collaborate on CAB recruitment efforts to ensure diverse representation in terms of geography, demographics, and sectors.

5. Convenor

Meetings will be convened and facilitated by a staff member of the Marion Institute, with support from staff from Old Colony Planning Council or Plymouth County.

6. Agenda Items and Meeting Materials

Marion Institute, in consultation with Old Colony Planning Council and Plymouth County, will set the agenda for each meeting as well as prepare and provide any necessary materials. CAB members can request items to be added at least five business days before the meeting. Items not on the agenda may be discussed under “Other Business” if time allows. Marion Institute will distribute agendas and materials in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law at least 48 hours prior to each meeting.

7. Meeting Summaries

Summaries of each meeting will be prepared by Marion Institute and distributed in accordance with the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

5. Meeting Frequency and Format

- Meetings will occur once a month from July 2025 to June 2026.
- Each meeting will last approximately 90 minutes.
- Meetings will be conducted virtually through Zoom unless the CAB approves an alternative.
- Participation in each meeting is highly encouraged; however, members can attend selectively based on the themes or their availability.

9. Decision-Making

The CAB is a working group under the Project Steering Committee. Decisions, when necessary within the CAB, will be reached by consensus when feasible. Ultimately, Old Colony Planning Council, as the lead under the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant, is responsible for delivering the required outcomes.

10. Term and Duration

Membership on the CAB will last for the duration of the project, from July 2025 to June 2026. Members may be invited to continue in an advisory capacity during the implementation phase of the Food Action Plan.

11. Contact

Joanne Zygmunt, Senior Planner, Old Colony Planning Council
jzygmunt@ocpcrpa.org or (774) 539-5059

Attachment 1: CARAT - Community & Agriculture Resilience Audit Tool

CARAT is a collaborative platform developed by the North American Food Systems Network and Indiana University to bring together community stakeholders for a self-assessment of their local food system. Its primary aim is to evaluate how a community's food system assets contribute to overall community resilience. To accomplish this, CARAT uses 101 indicators divided into seven themes that measure the resources within a food system. These indicators are key in guiding the next steps for improving community resiliency and food sovereignty.

The CARAT approach complements a more conventional technical approach to assessing food systems and furthers a systems perspective in the following ways:

- Measures policy, emergency planning, inclusivity, and accessibility
- Prioritizes collaboration and the inclusion of voices that are typically underrepresented, as necessary to completing the assessment, as well as identifies these qualities as essential to a resilient community food system
- Identifies additional community assets and soft infrastructure in the food system
- Provides a measure for improvement and change over time

In addition to providing a community with tangible data, once a CARAT has been completed, there are also less tangible benefits such as a shared language within the community about food systems, a better understanding of shared goals among stakeholders, improved understanding of collective capacity, stronger networks and lines of communication between food system stakeholders, and increased awareness of the roles stakeholders play within the food system.

The seven CARAT themes:

#	Theme	Focus
1	Natural Resource Management, Use, Conservation, and Preservation of Ecosystems and Farmland	● Protect farmland ● Facilitate land access ● Establish climate action plans ● Promote soil, land, and water conservation
2	Community Health and Well-Being	● Plans for access to food, especially for vulnerable, in event of emergency ● Provide better access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate foods
3	Community Self-Resilience in Food	● Enhance the community's control of its food system to lessen the need for external/unpredictable supply chains
4	Distributed and Democratic Leadership	● Engage all stakeholders in decisions, particularly those who have been historically marginalized
5	Focus on Local Farmers, Food Processors, and Food Distributors	● Expand opportunities for local farmers, ranchers, and other food producers ● Adequate infrastructure for processing, distributing and marketing local food
6	Food Sovereignty	● Ensure the food system is equitable, accessible, and inclusive
7	Place-Based Economics	● Implement policies and programs to enhance local resource ownership ● Educate a skilled and capable labor force